

SHINY DIRTY

DAVID BATCHELOR



for Ann

DIRTY SHINY

Essay by Richard Noble Interview by Clarrie Wallis

DAVID BATCHELOR



Jonathan Watkins
Director

This is the most comprehensive exhibition to date of work by British artist David Batchelor. It conveys his preoccupation with colour, as something ubiquitous and yet essentially indescribable, amongst other things as a challenge to the academicism that characterises too much in contemporary culture.

Batchelor makes various kinds of structures, often assemblages of second-hand objects, which function as foils for the lightness of light. Essentially, they are manifestations of colour. Those involving light boxes explicitly refer to illuminated signs, the shapes and colours of a metropolitan environment, and, at the same time, allude to post-war modernism. They constitute a kind of abstract impressionism but a closer look reveals their nuts and bolts, wiring and other means of construction. Batchelor thereby resists an aesthetic seamlessness and dispels any sense of mystery, opting instead to communicate a no-nonsense fascination with his medium.

Other works exhibited here include an installation of warehouse dollies, an exciting development out of Batchelor's *Monochromobiles* (made since 1997, collectively entitled *I Love King's Cross and King's Cross Loves Me*, courtesy of Joseph Beuys). On small castor wheels, each component exemplifies the instability and fugitive nature of its subject. The *Found Monochromes of London*, a sequence of projected slides, 35mm transparencies, also conflates notions of high-art purism and simple everyday phenomena. Eighty-one images depict blank rectangles – faded posters, empty billboards et cetera – superimposed on architecture and other surfaces of the city in an endless loop. The monochrome thus becomes a repeated void in a busier and more chaotic visual experience, exemplifying the possibility of the movement of art into life, and vice versa.

On the subject of transparency, and the revelation of how things are made, we take this opportunity to thank The Henry Moore Foundation, The Elephant Trust and AHRB for their invaluable support. Above all, thanks to David Batchelor for his refreshing vision.

06

BRICK LANE REMIX

2003

Steel shelving units, found lightboxes, acrylic sheet, vinyl,
fluorescent light, plugboards, cable

Dimensions variable

Wilkinson Gallery, London







DRAWING (HACKNEY ROAD)

2003

Spray paint and gaffer tape on graph paper

59 x 42cm

The artist

following pages:

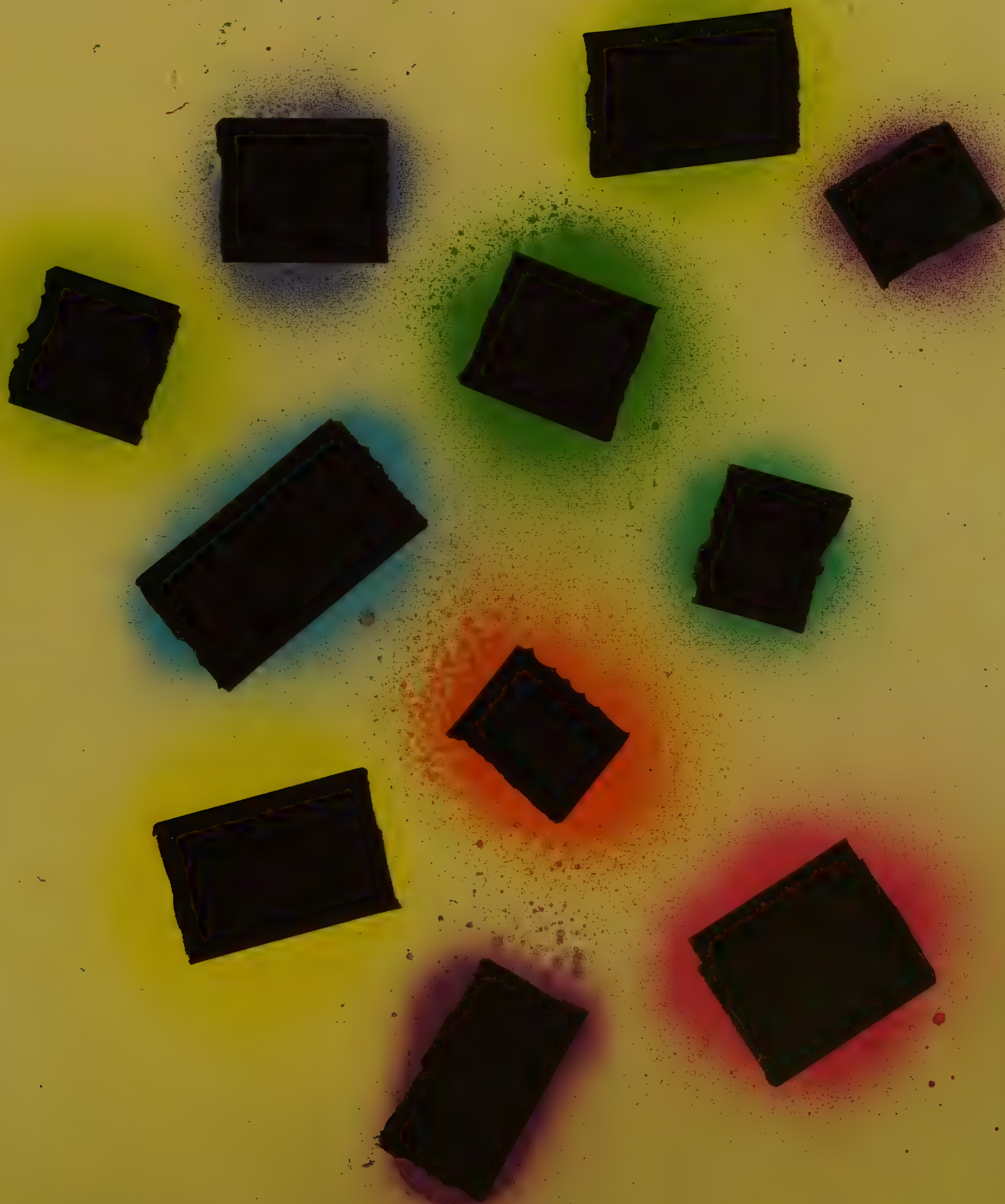
SPECTRUM OF HACKNEY ROAD

2002–3

Found dollies, polycarbonate, fluorescent light,
plugboards, cable

Dimensions variable

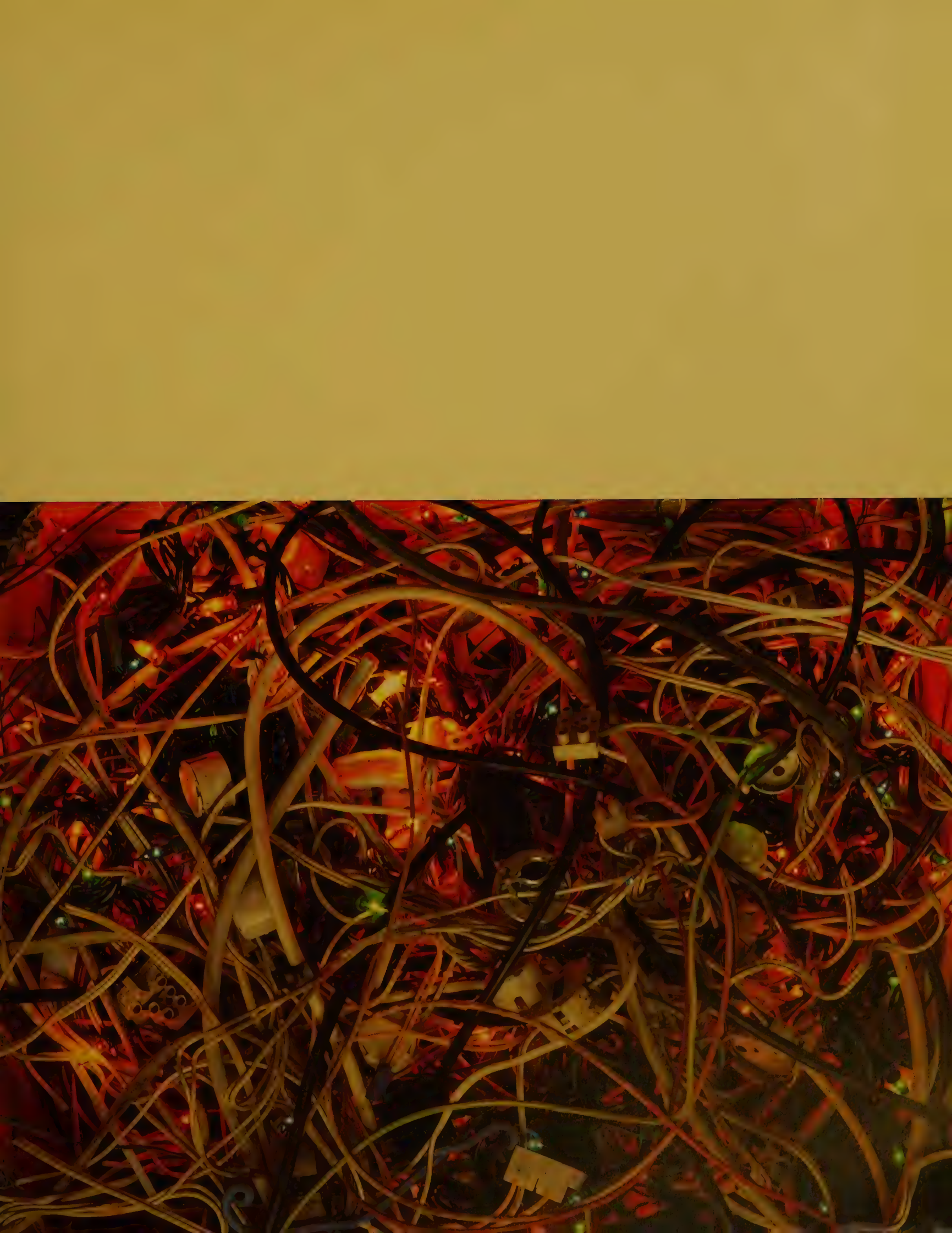
Wilkinson Gallery, London







14 **WAVELENGTH**
2003
Cardboard, cable, fairylights
20 x 60 x 65cm
Collection Mary Moore, London







18 **DRAWING (IDIOT STICK I)**
2003
Ink and pastel on squared paper
31 x 21cm
The artist

DRAWING (IDIOT STICK V)
2003
Ink and pastel on squared paper
31 x 21cm
The artist

following pages:

IDIOT STICK I
2003
Plastic bottles, polycarbonate, fluorescent light, cable
180 x 10 x 6cm
Private collection, London

IDIOT STICK V – CANDY PINK
2003
Plastic bottles, polycarbonate, fluorescent light, cable
180 x 10 x 6cm
Collection Andrew and Stephanie Hale, London



No. 1
1780 x 100 x 60



No. 5
(can'ty pick)
1780
x
110
x
50







There are innumerable ways to document a city, all of which end as arbitrarily as they begin: incomplete, provisional, as much about the documenter as the thing documented. The city's complexity forms the background of modernity, both the context in which modernity was achieved and the basis of the modern subject. It has been remarked that a 17th century Londoner could not have felt himself alone in a crowded marketplace; his sense of self would have been too completely defined, too circumscribed by, his place within the hierarchy of the commonweal. Yet for Baudelaire, the characteristically modern subject, his 'singular man', is defined by his detachment from and critical evaluation of the crowds that characterize the public life of modern cities. He is drawn to the energy of crowds and to the complexity and diversity of the modern city that houses them; but he remains alone with himself: detached, critical, compelled by his imagination to reconstruct some sort of order out of the relentless, constantly changing life-world engaging his senses. 'Thus the lover of universal life moves into the crowd as though into an enormous reservoir of electricity. He, the lover of life, may also be compared to a mirror as vast as this crowd; to a kaleidoscope endowed with consciousness, which with every one of its movements presents a pattern of life, in all its multiplicity, and the flowing grace of all the elements that go to compose life.'¹

David Batchelor's *Found Monochromes of London* seems to me very much in the spirit of Baudelaire's 'The Painter of Modern Life'. Like Baudelaire, Batchelor is drawn to the modernity of 'the transient, the ephemeral, the contingent';² he finds inspiration in aspects of urban life that most of us fail to notice, in the fissures and the discrepancies only spotted by those dedicated to walking the city's streets without specific intent. *Found Monochromes of London* has been assembled over the past six years. It consists of over eighty photographs of readymade or 'found' white monochromes. Slides of these monochromes succeed each other slowly in a darkened room, accompanied by the comforting mechanical hum and click of the slide projector. At first the subject of the piece is uncertain, flat rectangles of blank whiteness set against nondescript urban environments. In one a landscape-shaped monochrome is attached to a wire gate, behind which a typical London street recedes into the distance. In a second, a portrait-shaped monochrome is framed by a green signals box. The foreground is in focus: a brick wall topped by an iron railing, an exuberant growth of yellow and red flowers pushing through it, and the detritus captured by the small space left between the box and the wall. Everything behind the monochrome is out of focus, street bollards drawing the eye into the increasingly abstract distance. A third monochrome is framed by a car window; the car is a deep green, its windows darkly translucent. And so it goes.

The monochromes are organized formally: they appear first in landscape format, move gradually through square to portrait, and finally return to landscape. Each is a kind of void, a moment of emptiness in the visual cacophony of the street. There is something slightly abject about them, they flutter or hang or are stuck there without purpose, overlooked or forgotten. Yet they are also, in a subtle and unexpected way, sublime. Set against the busy background of the urban street, their whiteness seduces the viewer's gaze into a blank purposeless void which defies interpretation or understanding. They offer a moment's release from the relentless demands the city places on our reason: to navigate, to negotiate, to maximize utility in the face of its endless obstacles. More prosaically, they invite us to look at the city again in terms of a different register of possibilities. Batchelor's monochromes celebrate moments of accidental pointlessness in a relentlessly instrumental, purposive urban world; amusing, beautiful even, and rare enough in their way to invoke wonder. They record a different kind of looking, the kind that is open to the 'flowing grace of all the elements that go to compose life.'

Found Monochromes of London touches upon a number of the issues David Batchelor has been exploring over the past ten or so years. These might be listed somewhat arbitrarily as: the frame (front and back), colour (shiny, vulgar, manufactured), the monochrome (flatness, particularly in three dimensional form), found objects (particularly 'poor' or non-art materials), the city (as a frame of reference), and finally what might be termed an 'aesthetics of contingency' (the possibility of art arising out of chance associations, unexpected discoveries, or unlikely juxtapositions). It is perhaps the last preoccupation that is most clearly in evidence here. It's hard to imagine a project like *Found*

¹ Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life' in V. Kolocotroni, J. Goldman and O. Taxidou eds., *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 105.

² Ibid, 107.

Richard Noble

The Aesthetics
of Contingency

Monochromes of London at all without a significant degree of contingency or chance being integral to both its conception and execution. The notion of a 'found monochrome' seems too bizarre to be worked out in advance of having actually found one; and of course he has gone on finding them. Yet at the same time, Batchelor's discovery cannot have been wholly contingent. He is interested in the monochrome as a form, in particular the problem of how to make interesting what he has termed the dumbest and easiest form of painting. And he is an inveterate *flâneur*, committed to the *dérive* as a methodology of discovery, and to the constructed surface of the city as the encompassing reality of modern life. In this sense, the 'aesthetics of contingency' I ascribe to Batchelor is not mere reliance on chance, but rather an openness to the role of chance framed by a developed method of aesthetic investigation. The episteme of the *dérive* is carried over into his studio practice. *Found Monochromes of London* models his way of making art. Much of Batchelor's work finds its origin in the chance or contingent discoveries he makes while working in his studio. Something thrown away suddenly seems more interesting than what he's working on, two unlikely materials collide in an interesting way, objects are created through experiments with light bulbs and plastic bottles.

II

It will be evident from the work in this exhibition that the monochrome is one of Batchelor's abiding preoccupations, in part, as I suggested above, because he is interested in the problem of how to make such an uninteresting art form interesting. But his interest in the monochrome also derives from a formative interest in abstract painting, and particularly the issue of flatness in the picture plane. In this respect, Leo Steinberg's 1972 essay 'Other Criteria', has been very important for the development of his work.³ For Steinberg, the most revolutionary development in modern painting was not, as Greenberg had argued, the development of a self-referential subject matter, but rather the invention, by Rauschenberg and Dubuffet, of the 'flatbed' picture plane. Prior to Rauschenberg's 'combines' all painting, including abstract expressionism, had presupposed a head to toe correspondence to the viewer. Paintings were conceived and made to be looked at by persons standing. In Steinberg's view this essential verticality was both representational and naturalistic, because it related the picture plane directly to the human form – to its being in the world. Rauschenberg's 'combines' declined to simulate this verticality. They refer rather to any surface: a table top, studio floor or billboard, upon which information might be encoded. As a result the picture plane ceased to be the analogue of a visual experience of nature, and became instead the analogue of some kind of operational process. As Steinberg puts it: 'I tend to regard the tilt of the picture plane from vertical to horizontal as expressive of the most radical shift in the subject matter of art, the shift from nature to culture.'⁴

Batchelor would certainly locate his own aesthetic strategy within this shift in subject matter from nature to culture. For while he remains in crucial respects a formalist, or at any rate committed to the investigation of formal aesthetic issues in his work, the materials he uses and the subject matter he engages are firmly rooted in the artificial, manufactured world of the city. Thus all his works contain strong formalist elements: many are monochromes, colour is almost always an important component, and the objects he makes almost always contain or preserve a flat surface, a front or façade to which the eye is drawn. They are without exception beautiful, though their beauty resolutely resists any ontological grounding in nature. This resistance to nature is also absolutely central, and evident in his choice of materials. The typical Batchelor material is either found abandoned in a skip or industrial yard, or purchased cheaply at an electrical supply or a hardware store. Everything he uses is 'found' in the sense of being manufactured for some purpose other than art and 'poor' in the sense of being cheap, used up, industrial: trolleys, dollies, metal shelving, plastics, Perspex, and empty cleaning fluid bottles. In this sense we could say that Batchelor's art explores a certain kind of formalist aesthetics through the language of the readymade; not painting exactly, but not sculpture either. They are in a loose sense 'combines', but rather than letting the world into the painting, they allow the painting to be part of the world. Batchelor creates flat intensely colourful surfaces from the detritus of post-industrial urban life, but he always shows us the mechanics of what supports these surfaces: the dolly wheels, the lights, the wires, the plugs, taken together a delightful armory of low tech devices holding the line against illusion and against nature.

3 Leo Steinberg, 'Other Criteria' in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood eds. *Art in Theory 1900–1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Oxford: Blackwells 1993), 948–953.

4 Ibid., 950

The preoccupations animating the work in *Shiny Dirty* began to take shape in the early 1990s. *Two Graces* (1992) marks the beginning of Batchelor's exploration of the relation between the front and the back of the picture frame. The two works were like façades, extensions of a two dimensional form into three dimensions. The front part of each was a finished image placed towards the front of the gallery, while the back was totally unfinished, a crude wooden prop holding up the front. In this respect they resembled billboards (notably an important part of the visual architecture of the city), and while he does not regard them as particularly successful, they established a recurring theme in his work: the relation between front and back, finished and unfinished, shiny and dirty. Although it may be somewhat fatuous to ascribe the status of epiphany to any one idea or insight an artist might have, I think it accurate to say that Batchelor's discovery of the relation between the front and back of the picture frame marked a turning point in his work. It linked his earlier interests in modernist painting and the flat picture plane with his interest in minimalism and conceptual art. In one sense, it allowed him to solve his own particular problem with painting, which was, at a general level, that all the problems of painting had already been solved by American abstract painters.⁵ The new works allowed him to preserve a flat picture plane, but in a three dimensional form that allows us, post minimalism, to see everything: front and back, finished and unfinished.

At this early stage, Batchelor's concern seems to have been primarily with the creation of three dimensional works that had the character of façades rather than objects or sculptures. One way of doing this was to emphasize the contrast between the front and the back of the work. One day he decided to do this by painting the front of a work pink. This in turn led to his developing an interest in, and eventually a full-blown cultural theory of colour. As we noted above, this is typical of Batchelor's method of working. A relatively minor detour or diversion can lead to an entirely new subject area. His interest in colour has proven hugely important for his work as both an artist and as a cultural theorist. Colour has become one of his central preoccupations, and while it is necessary to insist that his use of colour as an artist is neither identical with nor derived from his cultural theory of colour, there is obviously significant overlap. We must therefore examine his extremely subtle analysis of how colour signifies in western culture in order to fully appreciate its role in his art.

Batchelor's book *Chromophobia* (2000) advances the thesis that western culture is on the whole chromophobic, which is to say that it associates colour with the constellation of things it defines as *other*, and in opposition to which it justifies its most fundamental values. In Batchelor's view:

Chromophobia manifests itself in the many and varied attempts to purge colour from culture... More specifically: this purging of colour is usually accomplished in one of two ways. In the first, colour is made out to be the property of some 'foreign' body – usually the feminine, the oriental, the primitive, the infantile, the vulgar, the queer or the pathological. In the second, colour is relegated to the realm of the superficial, the supplementary, the inessential or the cosmetic. In one, colour is regarded as alien and therefore dangerous; in the other, it is perceived as merely a secondary quality of experience, and thus unworthy of serious consideration.⁶

The text identifies a series of oppositions in western culture in which colour is relegated to the realm of difference. So whereas white or whiteness tends to be associated with the *Logos*, with innocence, goodness, the light of knowledge, the horror of the sublime; colour is a corruption, it deceives, it is cosmetic, superficial, vulgar, feminine. But of course this is just the most general articulation of the opposition. A great many artists, writers and even philosophers have expressed affinity or admiration for colour, while holding to the broader chromophobic assumption that colour can foster corruption, vulgarity or superficiality. Put differently, chromophobia can flourish among the chromophiles; and this is most often manifested in the opposition between natural and unnatural colours. Batchelor gives the example of Aldous Huxley whom, though an advocate for colour, characterized the artificial colours found at Woolworth's as debased versions of the transcendent glitter of precious stones.⁷ At its base then, chromophobia would seem to be an expression of arbitrary essentialism: of essence over appearance, nature over culture, order over disorder, Apollo over Dionysus. For Nietzsche, the

5 See Batchelor's remarks in the interview published in this book; he quotes Donald Judd to this effect in David Batchelor, *Chromophobia* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), 106: 'The achievement of Pollock and the others meant that the century's development of colour could continue no further on a flat surface... Colour, to continue, had to occur in space.'

6 Ibid, 22–23.

7 Ibid, 110.

Dionysian impulse, the source of art's true power and significance, was lost under the dead weight of Socratic rationalism. It would seem that Batchelor has caught a glimpse of the absent god in the paint section of Woolworth's.

But if we live, as Batchelor compellingly argues, in a chromophobic culture, what are we to make of art in which the cheesiest, most manufactured colours imaginable are a primary signifier? Clearly, it represents some sort of statement of allegiance. Batchelor's use of exuberant artificial colours sets him against the chromophobic tradition, and on the side of what it has stigmatized as cosmetic and feminine, trivial and dangerous. As a chromophile, he would release what has been suppressed back into the world, in all its vulgar, Dionysian splendour. But at the same time, his works cannot be read solely as exercises in chromophilia, nor simply as plastic elaborations of the thesis animating his book. Colour plays varied and specific roles in his work: sometimes as subject matter, sometimes as aesthetic attribute, sometimes as humour, sometimes as all three. So while there can be no doubt that Batchelor stands for colour and the radical re-valuation of chromophobic culture this entails, his use of it in his works is specific to the particular problems each different work poses.

Apocalypstick (2000) is a case in point. Colour is clearly central to this work, but it is only one part of a complex web of significations. The work consists of three series of intensely coloured light boxes stacked vertically on found metal shelving units. These are the colours of the city's streets; of shop fronts, restaurant neon, and illuminated Perspex signs. Their origins are industrial, but they are the encompassing visual reality of urban life world after dark. The light boxes are constructed out of coloured acrylic sheets: pinks, fuchsias, yellows, blues, oranges, whites and greens. The monochrome sheets are then framed in steel boxes (i.e. made part of a three-dimensional object), and lit from behind. The boxes are then stacked vertically according to size, the vertical columns varying slightly in terms of height and width. The colours produced are luminously strange; they release a distinctly unnatural colour into the world, the kind we might associate with a neon store sign or a new shag carpet rather than anything found in nature. Electrical cables pour out of the backs of the boxes and wind themselves into inchoate coils on the floor, multiple plug units forming a sort of miniature switching station next to the work. From a frontal perspective, one is confronted with gorgeously strange columns of monochromatic colour contained within readymade frames; from the back the work resembles a sound system or a stage-lighting set. The contrast is of course intentional, the artifice of beauty laid bare.

Apocalypstick incorporates many of the elements that characterize Batchelor's engagement with modernism. Three in particular come to the fore: the readymade, the monochrome and the series; and of course each of these refers to a specific moment in the history of modernism: the readymades of Duchamp, constructivist monochromes and minimalism's interest in seriality. The work has been assembled with things that were already in existence, things that have been manufactured for specific functional purposes that have nothing to do with art. It is in this sense an assisted, or perhaps more precisely, an assembled readymade, one that freely acknowledges the nature and limits of its materials while magically transforming them into something quite surprisingly beautiful. It demonstrates that beauty can both come from and co-exist with the most unlikely materials: poor, kitsch, abandoned or wholly functional. This point is reiterated in works like *Wavelength* (2003), a bunch of wires and fairy lights stuffed higgledy piggledy into a broken cardboard box; and *Idiot Sticks* (2003), used up cleaning fluid bottles stuck on sticks and illuminated from within. Moreover this is more broadly a truth about London, a city which yields up from its general tawdriness fragmentary and accidental, but nonetheless shimmering moments of beauty.

Apocalypstick also represents Batchelor's first attempt at stacking monochrome light boxes. Prior to this his monochromes had been mainly horizontal and close to the floor, painted perspex attached to the tops of dollies, as in the ironically titled *I Love King's Cross and King's Cross Loves Me* (1997).⁸ Subsequently he has made, or more precisely re-configured a number of works of stacked light boxes. These are both single stacks such as *Electric Colour Tower* (2001), and his vertiginous fifteen metre high *Spectrum of Brick Lane* (2003); or multiple stacked works like *Brick Lane Re-Mix* (2003). In a certain sense, these stacked monochromes are all part of the same work reconfigured in different ways in different contexts. Batchelor is quite happy to re-use the same light boxes

8 This title refers to the famous performance work by Beuys, in which he visited New York without actually seeing anything or touching the ground, spending seven days locked in a gallery space with a coyote. The performance was at least partly an expression of Beuys' ambivalence towards Vietnam-era America. Batchelor lived in King's Cross, and while he must have delighted in the luminous forest of kebab shop neon on offer there, it is possible to imagine him retaining a certain ambivalence towards some of its other characteristics.

in separate works, to add new ones or not as the circumstances require. This use and re-use of single components in what amount to serial configurations, recalls one of the defining methods of minimalist sculpture. The towers in particular, with their relatively precise vertical symmetry of coloured blocks, recall Judd's serial wall sculptures. But the relation is a tenuous one. Batchelor's use of seriality is in no way as rigorous or programmatic as LeWitt or Judd. There is no predetermined premise according to which each sculpture is executed; no attempt to remove chance or choice or the aspiration to beauty from the creation of the work.⁹ But there is nevertheless a good deal of repetition of the components both within and across the works, suggesting that like the grid, their boundaries are in principle infinite. Certainly in practice they are flexible. Both the single towers and the multiple stacks are varied in height and width and number according to the space in which they are installed. There is then a sense in which they are the products of, if not a predetermined premise, certainly a consistent conception of the work that can be adapted to separate circumstances. The execution of the work in any specific space will always entail judgments by the artist, but these judgments will necessarily be framed by the original conception. This is close to, if not identical with, the aesthetic austerity and rigour of Judd's shelving units, or Andre's horizontal brick constructions. The artist leaves very little trace of his subjectivity in the works. His judgments are about materials, forms, colours and the constructed object's relation to the space in which it is installed.

9 See Sol LeWitt, 'Serial Project No.1' in *Sol LeWitt* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1978), 170–71: 'One would follow one's predetermined premise to its conclusion, avoiding subjectivity. Chance, taste or unconsciously remembered forms would play no part in the outcome. The serial artist does not attempt to produce a beautiful or mysterious object but functions merely as a clerk cataloguing the results of a premise.'

III

Shiny Dirty is both the latest incarnation and also an extension of David Batchelor's project over the past ten or so years. Though most of the components (the boxes and the dollies) have been exhibited elsewhere, they have never been exhibited in this particular configuration. Thus the two large installations, *Brick Lane Remix* (2003) and *Spectrum of Hackney Road* (2002–2003) were configured and installed precisely for the Ikon exhibition. The smaller works are also very recent: *Wavelength* (2003), *Chromophobia I–IV* (2000), and *Idiot Sticks I and V* (2003). We can certainly see in these new works Batchelor's continued engagement with the front and back of the picture frame, with the monochrome, readymades and the colours of the street. But I think it is also evident that Batchelor's work continues to evolve in new and interesting directions. Both the monochrome and the flat concentrations of colour framed by the monochrome are less in evidence. The emphasis has shifted slightly away from the construction of three-dimensional objects containing the flat, monochromatic surfaces of colour so evident in the towers or the early dolly pieces. In *Shiny Dirty* colour has become more luminous, it seeps out of the works and into the world in a more subversive, viral-like way. This is particularly evident in *Spectrum of Hackney Road*, which is in effect a reversal of the front/back relation Batchelor examined in *I Love King's Cross and King's Cross Loves Me*. The dollies are lit from underneath, so the back has become the front; the dirty bits exposed directly to the world. Yet the eerily gorgeous greens and pinks and oranges glowing out from underneath the rough industrial surface of the dolly have an interesting effect. They hold the back and the front together in a kind of static tension: dirty and shiny, functional and beautiful, apparently unresolved yet somehow perfectly at ease with each other. This draws us back, in a way, to the sensibility of the flâneur and the episteme of the *dérive*. *Spectrum of Hackney Road* models the colours we encounter on the street, and the relentlessly functional, non-aesthetic context in which we encounter them. The pleasure these colours give, their beauty, both depends upon and transforms into something else the context in which they are encountered. They shine out from the aesthetic tedium of the shop fronts, illuminating the flâneur's way.

The seeping luminosity of colour continues in *Wavelength* and the *Idiot Sticks*. Both works exude colour, yet neither contains any sort of flat surface at all. They are in this sense the most sculptural of Batchelor's works thus far, but to say this is not to say they are sculptures – certainly not in the sense of embodying some imagined form. Indeed, there is a sense in which *Wavelength* is also an anti-sculpture. They are like all his works assisted readymades, but in each colour is doing its work without access to a flat surface. The *Idiot Sticks* invoke a fairly direct association with Flavin's fluorescent light works, though they are significantly more ironic. Used cleaning fluid bottles illuminated from inside extends the minimalist use of industrially produced materials ever so slightly in the direction of the absurd. They also put one in mind of Andre Cadere's *Barre de Bois*, multi-coloured, beaded poles placed

uninvited and surreptitiously into group exhibitions. There is something slightly subversive about an art work made of plastic bottles on a stick, it almost seems too easy. But this lightness of touch masks a more serious purpose. The colours they release into the world are gorgeously seductive and totally artificial; like a sort of LSD fuelled hallucination of colour. Welcome to Woolworth's.

Wavelength uses colour rather differently, more mutedly and with rather less irony. But the work also has a kind of accidental quality to it, as though it was something Batchelor just noticed one day on his studio floor. In fact this seems pretty close to what happened. The softly pulsing fairy lights were added for colour, but again the work developed out of an accidental encounter in his studio. It reflects Batchelor's commitment to learning from his materials, rather than just imposing what he knows on them.¹⁰ We could say that the colours released from *Wavelength* are less about infecting the world with chromophilia than with the formal breakdown of the flatness of Batchelor's colour fields and the frames he has tended to impose on them. The colour in *Wavelength* percolates up from the depths of the box, creating a kind of illuminated texture from the chaos of the used cables. It spills out, with the cables, over the broken down edges of the box and leaks into the world. There is a sense then in which this work models the new direction in Batchelor's work I noted above; a movement away from the problem of how to project a two dimensional frame into space, and from the containment of colour imposed by the frame. But it must also be said that this work has the most extraordinary, ethereal quality to it. How could something so beautiful come from such abject stuff?

10 See page 40.

IV

I began by suggesting Batchelor's project was in the spirit of Baudelaire's; that he would have us look again, indeed embrace the surface of our cities as the fundamental frame of reference in modern life. He is in Baudelairean terms 'the lover of life', because he immerses himself in the chaotic artificiality of the city with the explicit intention of celebrating it. For Batchelor what matters is precisely what Baudelaire termed the 'transient, the ephemeral, the contingent', the side of modernism that tends to be crushed under its commitment to universals (in science, in ethics and in art). The city that emerges through these works is an artificial, totally manufactured place. Its materials, its colours, even the moments of sublimity it throws up are not so much unnatural as against nature. Yet there is in all this Dionysian exuberance for the artificial a kind of lingering, if accidental, sublime. The sheer unlikeliness and yet beauty of Batchelor's art invokes a kind of wonder that brings us up against the limits of language, against the limits of our ability to impose meaning or interpretation on the objects he makes. In addition, Batchelor's take on the modern city suggests a certain allegiance, as I remarked above, with what might be termed the party of difference, the party of those who have in one way or another been stigmatized as *other* in western culture. But this is not to suggest that the work is in any way didactic or even political. Batchelor's aesthetic concerns are primarily formal, and in the end it is in these terms that his works demand to be judged. Nonetheless, their formal success entails an effective if indirect element of subversion. The colours they release into the world are totally unnatural and totally irresistible; they implicate us in the most improper chromophilic desires, and at least potentially disrupt the register of oppositions ingrained in us by our chromophobic culture.

30 **CHROMOPHOBIA I–IV**
2000
4 x D-type photographic prints
76 x 95cm
Edition of three



32 FOUND MONOCHROMES OF LONDON

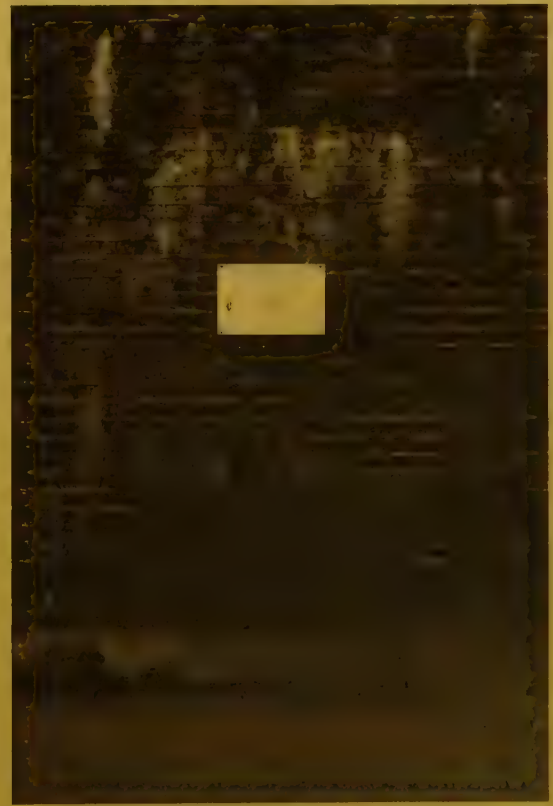
1997 – 2003

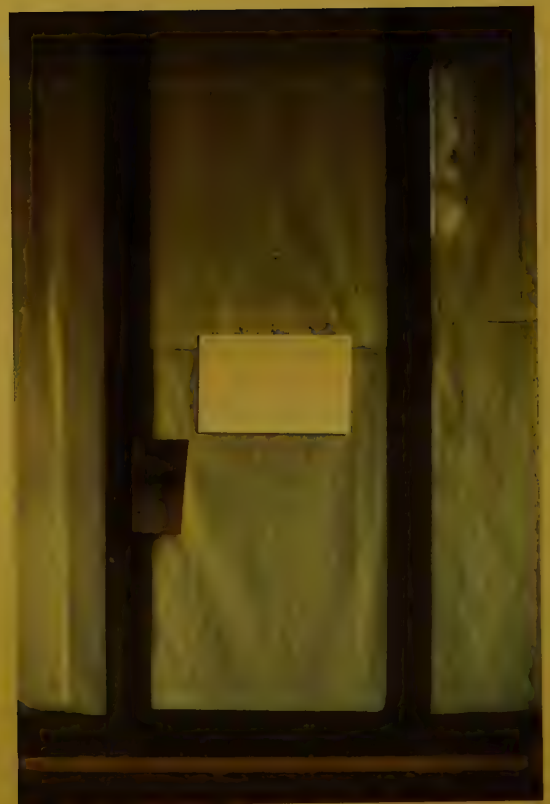
Projector, projector stand, 81 slides

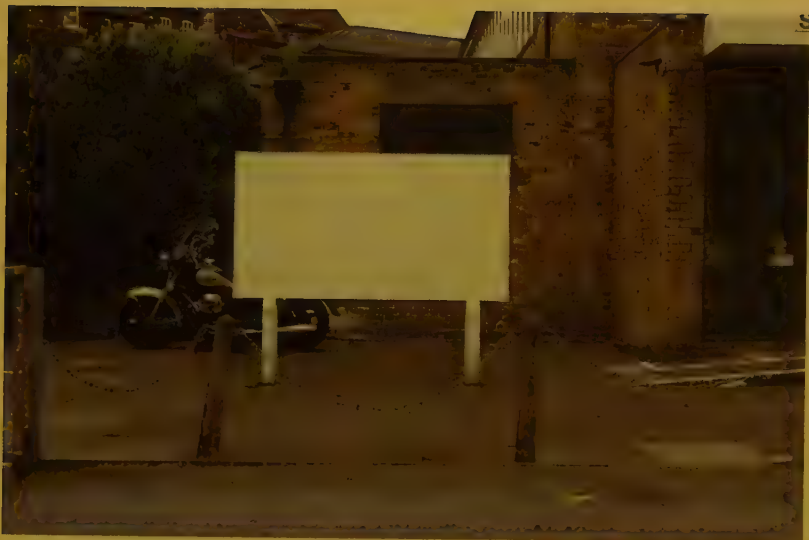
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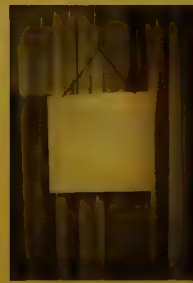
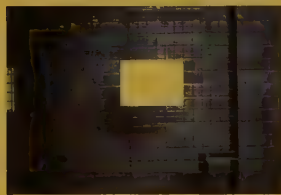
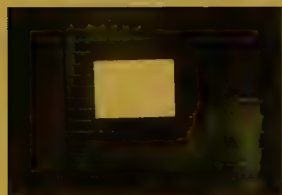
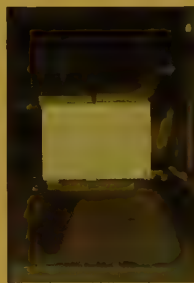
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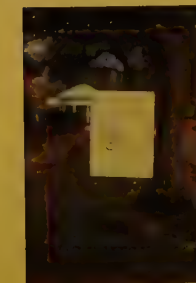
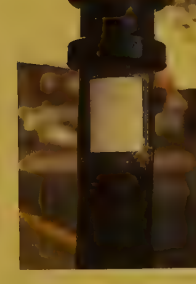
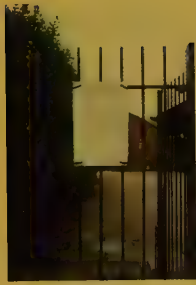
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69	Spitalfields	08.06.03
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78	King's Cross	30.08.03
79	Bethnal Green	17.07.02
80	Haggerston	30.08.03













**David Batchelor
interviewed by
Clarrie Wallis,
07.11.03**

CW I want to discuss the work you have made over the last decade or so, but I thought we could begin by talking about earlier days. I know you started out as a painter, what sort of work were you interested in at the time?

DB Well, it began to get interesting when I was introduced to post-war American art. As an eighteen year old I didn't really know much about anything, but I went to Amsterdam and saw my first Rauschenberg, my first Pollock, my first Barnett Newman – and I was blown away by the stuff. I must have seen illustrations in books only I couldn't make much sense of them. This was the first time I encountered the work directly and it was absolutely phenomenal, unforgettable.

Do you remember specific works or was it more the general effect?

The Newman was *Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue*. The Rauschenberg was *Charlene*; it was a *combine* from 1955 and it was a big red thing. Actually it's not as big or red as I imagined it, but then I was smaller, and greener, I guess. It's not a huge work and not quite as aggressive, not quite as confident, as outrageous, as I thought it was. In fact it looks rather neat these days. But at the time I remember seeing *Charlene* and thinking it was the exact equivalent of *Catch 22* and the film *M*A*S*H* and the *Velvet Underground*. It had that cool, counter-cultural, cocky, smart-arse knowingness that I thought it was just wonderful. The Rauschenberg isn't actually as big or as red as the Newman but somehow it had more punch and at that age you're not really into subtlety or cultural complexity. A year later I went to New York to look at Pollock, Warhol and so on. And that made it incredibly hard to continue painting.

Why?

Because it was too good. It seemed to have sorted out everything you could imagine.

So it seemed that there was very little to add?

Well I couldn't imagine how I could make a painting that would in any way live up to that stuff. In which case there's no point in making a painting. Therefore, like everyone else in my generation, I got drawn to Minimalism and Conceptual Art. We abandoned our paintbrushes and gathered our tip-ex brushes, and sat around with typewriters not quite knowing what to do with them. Actually a group of us produced a small scurrilous magazine, as did groups of students in other colleges at the time. That was interesting, but it was very difficult to know how to continue after leaving college.

Do you think you are still informed by what happened at that time?

We all have to escape our mentors and teachers. The people I was looking to and being taught by informally and formally when I was a student were mostly involved, directly or indirectly, with Art & Language. I'm not sure I learnt very much from them about how to make art, but I did learn how to think about art and how to think about the relationships we encounter and I think I learnt a lot about scepticism. That remains a value.

What was being shown in the museums and commercial galleries at the time?

When I was an art student there were no big shows that I can remember; obviously there were some important commercial galleries but most didn't reveal themselves to me at the time.

What about the whole culture of private views and parties? What that was like for a young artist in comparison with now?

Well of course I was in Nottingham, not London. It's a fact that the art market was in a state of collapse during the late seventies so the idea that you could leave college and become an artist was just laughable. It just didn't happen. You always knew you would have to support your habit by part-time work or being on the dole, which was much more an option then than it is now. In some respects we had very low expectations when we were students: very low expectations of making a living but at the same time very high expectations of the counter-culture. Bear in mind though that this was the time Margaret Thatcher was about to be elected, which wasn't exactly what we had planned. Also, the absence of a market meant there was perhaps a certain freedom to experiment – but I don't want to idealise that because there was no money,

and if there's no money you don't have that much freedom to experiment at all. But there was never the insidious pressure that there is now of 'If I haven't had my first show in a London gallery by the time I'm twenty-five then I'm a failure'. I'm thankful for that.

Did you visit London much?

London didn't have anything much to offer. You had to go to continental Europe, which first of all for me was Amsterdam, and then, in the eighties, Cologne. That was where contemporary art was, there was nothing much in London, I promise you.

What about the time you stopped making work? Is there any sense in which that might have been a positive experience?

Even though I found it impossible even to think about making work for a long time after college, I still think the benefits were such that it was worth it. It wasn't as though I was completely out of touch – I was reading quite a lot of art history and theory, and then began writing about art during the '80s. That meant I still had to look closely and think about what I was looking at. And that in turn gradually pushed me back toward the studio.

Let's fast forward and talk about the last ten years or so. I remember the first show I saw including your work, which was at the Victoria Miro Gallery in 1993. There seemed to be a kind of flatness about the work, and you placed it right up against the gallery window.

In the mid-to-late eighties I started making works that were based on simple frames. The starting point was the notion that if Duchamp was right and if Conceptualism was right then it's not the work itself that has value, it's more how it's framed that determines its worth – a very obvious and familiar argument now. So I thought I'd cut out the middle-man and make some shaped frames and hang them on a wall. By the time I was asked to put something in a summer show at the gallery, I had begun to make three-dimensional versions of these frames, the idea being that the viewer themselves framed the work in a certain way depending on where they stood. They were placed right in front window of the gallery, which looked directly on to Cork Street. The idea was that when you were on the street you'd see the front of the work, which would be relatively interesting and 'finished'. But going into the gallery – the door was around the side – all you would see was a rough blank back and a crude wooden prop. It would be like a stage set, a façade. These things were eight foot high and four foot wide and there were three of them – called *Three Graces*. Except the gallery refused to take all three and it became *Two Graces*.



The idea of stressing the difference between the front and the back – that's both quite unusual and something that has recurred in your work on a number of occasions over a number of years.

That was my first attempt at working in three dimensions, and with the idea of distinguishing face and support. Even though I think the ones I did in '93 were a mess and didn't achieve anything of any consequence, certainly that question has stayed with me ever since. I think it is probably only in the last couple of years that I have begun to come to terms with it.

After I got back to the studio, I remember within a morning I made a very small work which had a much more extreme relationship between the front and back, where the front was shiny and bright and without any surface marks, and the back was all grubby bits of found wood. I used some pink paint on the front to enforce the difference between the face and the intrinsically dirty material behind. That was my first 'colour episode' but it took me a long time to figure out what was interesting about colour and how it could be used, and to some extent that's still going on.

UNTITLED
1993
Wood, acrylic sheet, paint
32 x 14 x 7 cm
The artist



So would it be true to say your interest in colour came about to some extent by accident, or as a by-product of another interest?

Absolutely. I never made a conscious decision to work with colour, it was much more of a studio accident than that, as is pretty much everything that happens. I had become very interested in making a three-dimensional work which was not in-the-round but was somehow a façade, that had a sort of flatness about it, one in which the face would be radically different from the support and I just happened to use a bit of colour as a way of emphasising and enforcing that difference. Once I had started using colour, I simply began to notice how little there was around in contemporary work at the time and that, of course, then became interesting.

When we talked before you contrasted the façade with the idea of sculpture in-the-round, which you associated with an idea of nature or an experience of the natural world.

This seems to make sense to me, although it's not theorised at all. In-the-round suggests something complete and relatively harmonious – the analogue of an experience of nature, of how you might view a tree for example, or something you might at least expect of a natural form like that. The city doesn't offer those kinds of harmonies; it seems impossible to assume what occurs on one plane will continue on another; the relationship between surface and structure is less predictable.

So when you started to become more interested in the idea of colour, was it that you then found, after a period of time, that you became attracted to more artificial colours? Where did that come from?

I hate the idea that I might be called a 'colourist' because to me that always – again – connotes nature: the wonders of natural colour and of natural light and of flowers and hillsides and reflections off the sea. I've never had the remotest interest in that kind of thing. The only colours that really interested me were unnatural and artificial colours. Industrial colours, city colours: chemical, electrical, plastic, metallic, neon... It's hard to keep up. Even though the colours of the city were radically transformed in

the 19th century, I don't think it was until the 1960s that artists really began to work with that. Now computer colours are really advanced, but in our day-to-day lives most vivid colour comes through the television. *The Simpsons* offers some of the best colours around.

You mentioned this idea of the studio accident being somehow the generator of your work. In what sense do you mean this?

The studio is an interesting place. A lot of artists don't use studios nowadays, and there's a lot of talk about 'post production' and the work being made in the gallery or museum. In that sense I'm rather old fashioned, I depend on the studio as a very particular kind of site where you can fumble around and follow your moods and, if you're lucky, be able to follow up the consequences of your mistakes.

Chance discoveries, random encounters...

Pretty much everything I've done has at some stage been shaped by exactly that. Noticing something about two things that just came to rest next to each other. Or realising that something you were going to throw away is actually more interesting than the bit you were keeping. Or realising that the raw materials you got into the studio were actually more interesting before you started work on them. If you remain open to that it's always interesting and it's at that point that you begin to learn something from the materials rather than imposing what you know on the materials.

Your work often involves a combination of two quite different materials, such as old timber or metal on the one hand, and painted or coloured acrylic on the other. How did you arrive at Perspex?

I knew I wanted to work with a very shiny, flat immaculate surface which would then be supported by something pretty much its opposite – dirty, contingent and crude. There is an old sign-writing technique I knew of, which involves painting on the back of glass with enamel paint. It produces an exceptionally flat sharp finish, you don't see any of the brush work and it's really reflective, like a coloured mirror. So I started painting on clear acrylic and bonding it to a wooden or metal support.

I made a rather complicated series of constructions in this way, but I was always slightly uncomfortable with geometry and the rectilinearity of the pieces. I wanted the colours to have a sense of being provisional and unstable and their relationships to appear contingent rather than fixed and determined. However, in the process of making the works I would end up with a lot of coloured off-cuts that would just get stacked in the corner of the studio. This led to one of those moments where I realised that what I was throwing away was more interesting than what I was keeping. I picked up a dozen small bits of coloured acrylic that were lying together and stuck them on a shelf to see whether there was anything there. Immediately I did that, they made the structured, bolted together, rectangular pieces look laboured and unnecessary.



What was interesting about the shelf pieces at the time was that they were in an odd position between painting and sculpture. On the one hand they were physical things that had depth, on the other, they were on the wall and in a space for painting.

I liked the indeterminacy of them. For me, they were the first pieces of work that held my interest for very long, mainly I think because they didn't look like they were trying too hard. Things leaning against walls look lazy and I liked the idea of work appearing a bit lazy.

opposite:
**I LOVE KING'S CROSS AND
KING'S CROSS LOVES ME, 1**
1997
Found objects, acrylic sheet,
enamel paint
Dimensions variable
Dispersed
Installation at The Economist
Plaza, London
15 January – 3 March 1998

They don't seem lazy – they seem relaxed in a way that feels different from the earlier work.

If that's what they were, that's what I needed. I do think the kind of work that I am drawn to appears light or weightless or relaxed or almost effortless. The obvious examples of that are people like Polke in painting, and in sculpture at the moment, people like Franz West. Some of West's are so relaxed they're half asleep, and some are totally off their heads.

There's also something about Minimalism as a reference point, and Judd in particular.

Judd and Flavin's colour. Judd's colours are so strange. I remember the first time I saw a lot of his work in New York I was astonished at how vulgar the colours were. Appalled. Of course, that's exactly what came to interest me about them. But there is this curious thing: read any article or learned essay on Judd and you'd never know that the work had any colour in it. It's simply not discussed, it's as if it's not there, it's all about structure and repetition and interval and so on. Flavin's use of coloured fluorescent light – again, it's very intense and it's very simple and it looks easy. At the same time there are Warhol's colours: the solid chemical quality of Marilyn's face and the sense that they can be constantly re-ordered, and they're so completely artificial. They're flat, solid and misregistered, the colour never quite fits. More recently I've become drawn to Nauman's colours. They seem to have a bit of evil in them – there's a sort of darkness his use of colour that you don't get in Judd or Flavin.

With the exception of his neon works I don't so much associate Nauman with colour.

Some of his films crank up the colour values in a very odd way, and there are also the glowing corridors. I think with Nauman you get a combination of bright colour and darkness, be it literal or metaphorical. Judd and Flavin's work always connotes newness and the recently made and the as yet unspoiled. I'm not interested in that sort of newness at all, or at least, not interested in that unqualified newness that is characteristic of much Pop and Minimalism. That may be a European thing. We live in old cities that have gone wrong, that have been rebuilt and reinvented. They're palimpsests, they're layered, one thing inscribed on top of another. They are unsystematic and deeply flawed. And we always put up the wrong colour curtains in our Le Corbusier villas.

We've talked about historical influences but are there people working at the moment that you feel an affinity with?

One of the best experiences of the last few years was to be involved in Bruce Ferguson and Louis Grachos's *Postmark* show at SITE Santa Fe. It included a number of North American and European artists from a range of generations – Polly Apfelbaum, Linda Besemer, David Reed, Olivier Mosset, John McCracken and others. It was one of the few times I felt we shared a common set of questions or problems, or even just materials we worked with. Bruce's thesis was that there has been a sort of counter tradition in abstraction that is neither about formal purity nor metaphysics. Rather it is immersed in the contingent and everyday life in the city. It was a critique of the notion that abstract art is necessarily exclusive and contemplative. That is pretty close to my thinking. More recently I have shown with Jim Lambie at Tate Britain. Jim's work and mine are very different in their cultural references but there's quite a degree of overlap in the kinds of materials we use. We both get our colours from the same kinds of places. Not literally, I mean I don't go to the girls' bit of TopShop, but the colours you're going to get with vinyls and plastics. I think, in painting, I remain very interested in Larry Pitman's work, I like its simultaneity and overload, and I'd say the same about Chris Ofili. I probably regard Dieter Roth's work as highly as anyone's perhaps because it's so much about being in a studio, responding to the relationships and the events that occur there.

The dollies you began to use in the mid-to-late nineties are clearly readymades or found objects. Could we talk about how that came about?

The dollies were the first adapted or modified readymades, though in a way they were like the shelf pieces insofar as they were built out of the residue of other studio work. They came about in a very simple way. I had been trying to find a way to make horizontal coloured work, having noticed that colour on the floor is usually

more intense than colour on the wall. But I couldn't think of an appropriate support for them. I had this filthy old flat-bed trolley in the studio because I thought it would be useful for moving my *Three Graces* around. Actually it was useless but I'd never got round to throwing it away. I kept the trolley and chucked out the sculpture. Anyway, I had a panel of painted acrylic and I stuck it on the trolley in order to dry it – and it sort of fitted. Both were about the same size so it almost looked like a piece of work, which is to say a red monochrome on four wheels. It looked funny. So I dug out another little trolley and stuck another coloured panel on that. Then I had two and two looked slightly more interesting than one. I think what attracted me to them was partly their absurdity – a monochrome on wheels is a fairly ridiculous thing. Also wheels imply mobility and provisionality. They didn't have a fixed relationship with one another. I ended up with fifteen or sixteen of these dollies, all different heights, shapes, types of wheels, and all different colours.

You have said they were mostly scavenged from around King's Cross – hence the title *I Love King's Cross and King's Cross Loves Me*. How do you decide to group and position them?

One of the pleasures is I don't have to worry too much about whether the work is finished. I just keep building the units and I take as many as I think I will need to the gallery. It also allows me to arrange them in response to the setting. At first I laid them out in a line like they were parked; more recently I have placed them in a looser more scattered way. At one point I think I had about fifty of these trollies in the studio. Everything I've done since then, such as the lightboxes and the found monochromes, is built in exactly the same way. I just amass as many as I can, and then figure out what to do with them.

There's still that basic principle of the readymade support juxtaposed with a monochromatic surface – it runs through much of your work: the shelves, the dollies, the lightboxes.

Dirty readymades for shiny monochromes – that's generally what they are. All the lightboxes are acquired from skips and salvage companies, I clean up the insides and put new lights in and a panel of colour, be it opaque or translucent or transparent.

What led you to work with old lightboxes, and what led you to arrange them on steel shelving or in very tall towers? It's a departure from the emphatic horizontality of the dollies.

You don't really go into a studio with a subject, that's something you come out with. When I realised my subject had become this relationship between the urban environment and its colours, then I thought I ought to try working with coloured light, because that's one of the most characteristic forms of colour in the city – illuminated shop signs, neon and the like. So I went out and found some lightboxes and then spent ages trying to figure out what to do with them. Whether to have them on the wall, like paintings, or projecting out from the wall as they do from the sides of shops, or just stacking them on top of each other. I put some on wheels at one point. The towers of Dexion shelving units seemed simple and fairly practical, and Dexion is such beautiful stuff.

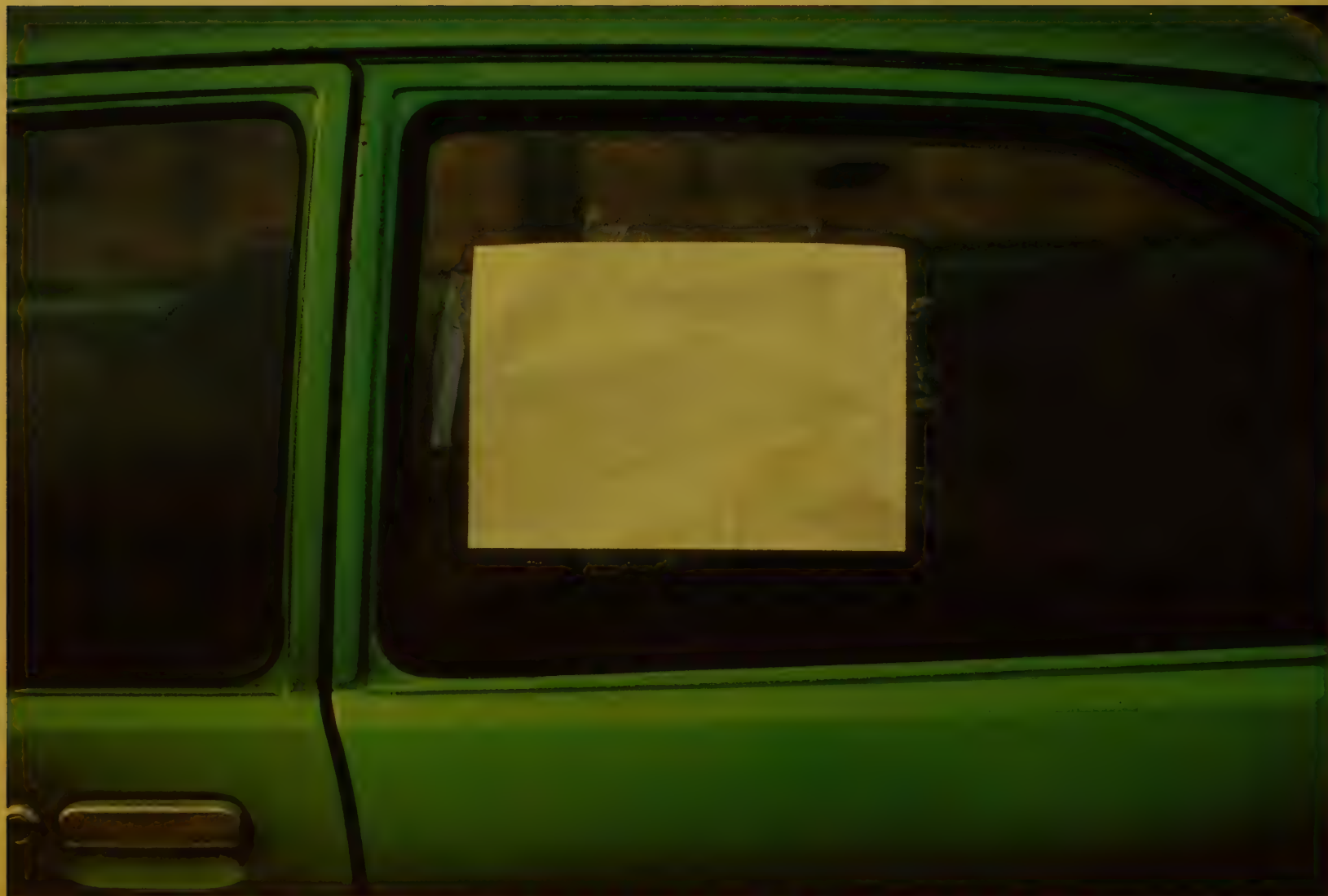
It hadn't occurred to me until much more recently that most of the work I do is either very tall and thin or very low and I don't seem to make much in between. I don't know why this is. The dollies are never more than twenty centimetres high and the towers are completely the opposite – they have a very small footprint but they can be extremely high, up to fifteen metres. I have occasionally shown the two together.

I was also struck by the piece *Barrier* – working in a slightly different way in that you blocked off or divided up the gallery spaces.

I like the idea of using a work to interfere with your physical passage around a space. I also wanted to deal with the front-and-back idea in a rather different way. The galleries at 38 Langham Street provided me with opportunity I was looking for: two rooms with a large double doorway between them. So I filled in the gap with about 25 lightboxes. You had the choice of going into one gallery which was all light and colour, or the other which was all steel and cabling. One work but two very different experiences.

'Horizontality' and 'verticality' are often opposed in theory, and obviously horizontality has had a big press recently, what with Rosalind Krauss and the *l'Informe* show.





Not just recently. It was discussed by Leo Steinberg in 'Other Criteria' – pretty much my favourite essay on post-war art. He introduces the idea of the 'flatbed picture plane'. Steinberg talks about the shift from the vertical, optical, window-onto-the-world of traditional painting to the horizontal, opaque, table-like surface of Rauschenberg's *Combines*. That was written in the mid-sixties. The other thing Steinberg offers is an alternative interpretation of flatness, which is neither a Greenbergian formalist flatness, nor yet TJ Clark's flatness-as-alienation. I'm interested in things that are literally flat.

You've talked about the idea of the readymade and the monochrome and how they are to you what the trees and skies are to landscape painters. Do you see the monochrome as a basic pictorial element in the urban environment?

The monochrome is a subject that has interested me for a long time, partly because it's the dumbest form of painting that could possibly exist. Anyone can make a monochrome – it really doesn't require craft skill of any kind at all. The difficult thing is how to make a good one or an interesting one. How do you make a monochrome that isn't like every other monochrome? That always seemed to offer a problem for the studio.

And yet it has a long and complex history, and an honourable place in the development of abstract art.

Jeff Wall wrote a really interesting essay about On Kawara in which he argues that on the one hand you have a tradition of abstraction in art which ends up with the monochrome and on the other you have the painting of modern life which ends up in photojournalism. One represents turning away from and the other an engagement with the city and the everyday. I never bought it. In theory, it makes perfect sense, but in practice it's contradicted all the time. I wanted somehow to make a monochrome of modern life.

Is that where the photographs of monochromes started?

Yes. The *Found Monochromes of London*, as they are portentously called. All the ones I've published and shown have been white. I did take black and yellow and blue ones and so on but the white ones were the only ones that worked for me. I think that's because they're more like holes in the visual fabric, occasional voids in an otherwise saturated visual environment.

By presenting them as a slide show, you also notice that the white is not the same white in all of them – it's not pure at all, there are many types of white. The monochrome is already in the city – it's just that we don't notice them. I've been 'documenting' them for about six years now and I have about a hundred. These monochromes are like the dollies insofar as they are found objects and they're also invisible found objects.

They're only there for a short time and they're papered over or ...

...or they're so ubiquitous you just don't notice them. They're so intrinsically valueless that you don't pay any attention to them. I like the idea of looking at what is overlooked.

I guess it goes back in part to the Baudelairian idea of the city and modernity. The idea that modernity is not so much the bits of the city that advertise themselves to you, rather it is in the scraps and the fissures and the gaps and the corners that are overlooked.

'The Painter of Modern Life'. I love that essay. It's the first art criticism of modernism. In a way it is continued a century later in Steinberg's essay.

In the 1920s the monochrome was seen, by Rodchenko and others, as a revolutionary event.

The end of easel painting and the end of bourgeois art. It always seems a sad and ironic fate for the monochrome eventually to have become a form of boardroom decoration. In between those two points, you have people like Helio Oiticica and Yves Klein making, not monochromes of the revolution perhaps, but absurdist and exuberant monochromes that have a quality which interests me. Putting a monochrome on wheels puts some of the stupidity back into the genre.

Your use of colour when it comes to the monochrome is very

particular. I wouldn't call it tasteless or vulgar entirely, but there's a deliberate engagement with our cultural prejudices around colour.

The kinds of colours I look for are mostly intense, bright, shiny or glowing. To use a musical analogy, rather than a complex chord which might produce a rich deep maroon, I'm much more drawn to the sharp pinks and acid greens, which are more like a single note being pressed very hard. What I think Dave Hickey called 'Maybelline colours'.

Cosmetic.

Precisely. The connection between colour and cosmetics is fascinating: the idea that colour is artificial, laid on a surface, make-up; and it's therefore potentially also a seduction and a deception.

There is also something of that in *The Wizard of Oz*, where it suddenly goes from 'real' black-and-white into a fantastical Technicolor.

The Wizard of Oz is the greatest essay on colour in the twentieth century without any shadow of a doubt. It matches anything by Wittgenstein or Kristeva. There's the fantastic transition into colour which at the end is revealed to be a delusion because Dorothy was unconscious. It was all a dream. It's entirely consistent with the argument that colour represents a loss of self – a kind of delirium, a false consciousness, a Fall, a kind of death.

Does this relate to the photographs of the battered soft toy you showed at Sadler's Wells? Its very colourful but it's also rather Fallen.

I came across this big black-and-white panda in a magenta-and-orange clown's outfit with a bright green hat. It had been thrown out and was dirty and lying on the ground. A bunch of kids had kicked the shit out of it and the polystyrene filling had spilled out over the wet pavement. I found it when I was looking for monochromes; it was an incredibly grey day around dusk and there was really no colour in the world. And there it was. It looked like a victim of a chromophobic incident, a victim of its colour.

And the title is *Chromophobia*, like your book?

Yes. I took the shots at pretty much exactly the same time as my book was being published. I really wanted it on the cover but it was too late – the book had gone to press. But it was the perfect example of chromophobia. It's a bit like one of those police scene-of-the-crime photographs. I think it also has a lot in common with the dollies and the light boxes: it's found, it's of the city, it's brilliant but damaged and dirty.

SHELF-LIKE 6

1997

Acrylic sheet, fluorescent paint, steel

120 x 39 x 12cm

Wilkinson Gallery, London

opposite top

SHELF-LIKE 2

1996

Acrylic sheet, enamel paint, steel

66 x 35 x 100cm

Wilkinson Gallery, London

opposite below

SHELF-LIKE 1

1996

Acrylic sheet, enamel paint, steel

66 x 35 x 100cm

Wilkinson Gallery, London





48 DRAWINGS (DOLLIES)

1998

Enamel and aluminium paint on graph paper

21 x 30cm

The artist

following pages:

FOUR DOLLIES

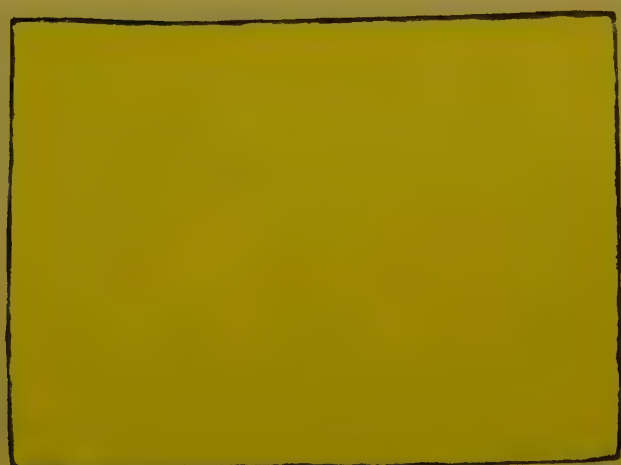
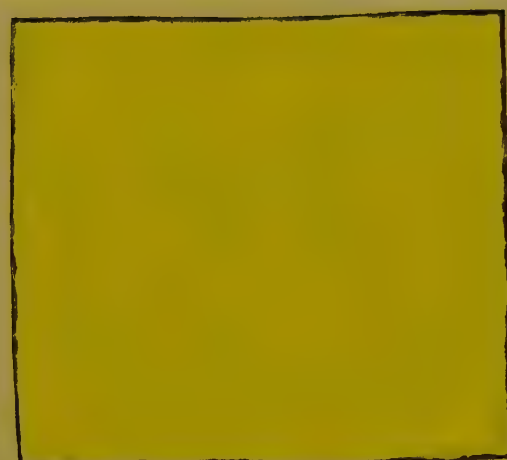
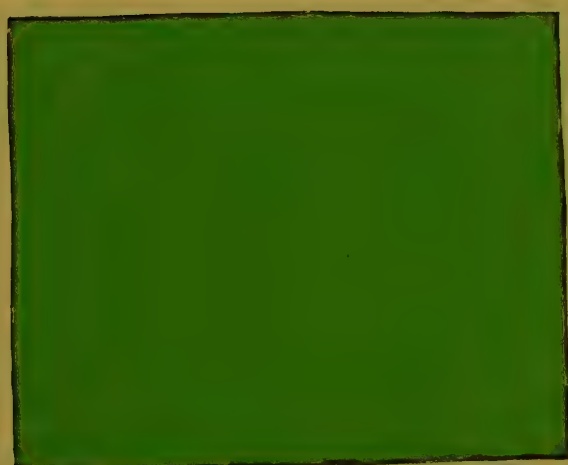
2000

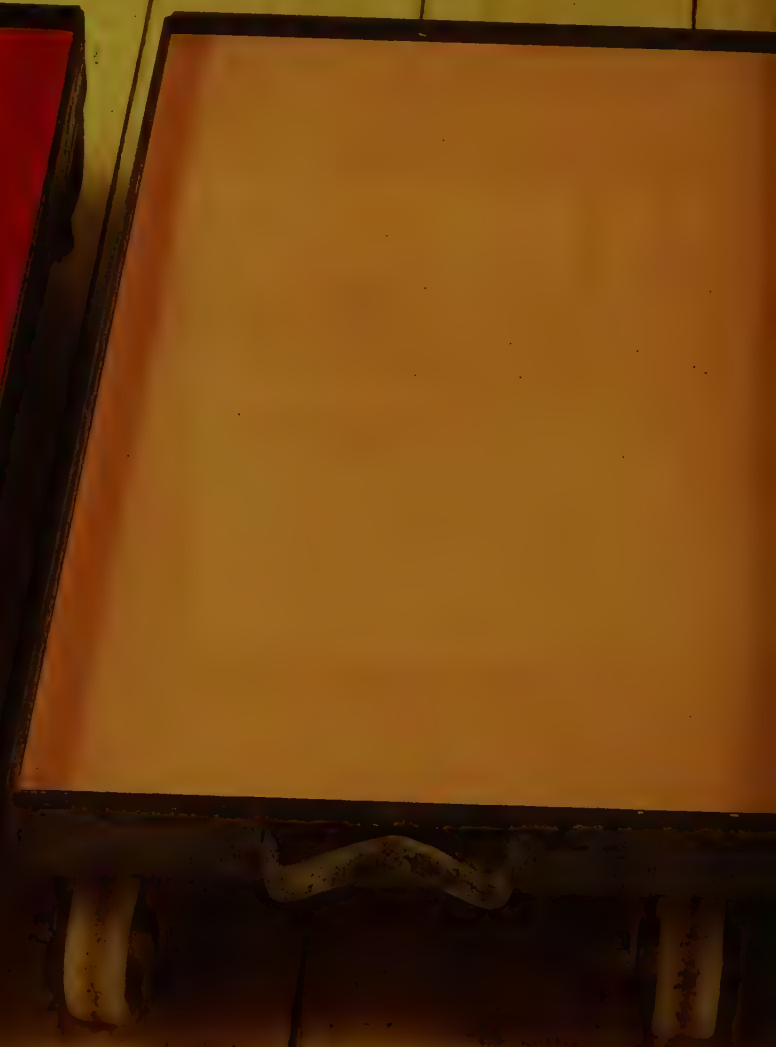
Found objects, acrylic sheet, enamel paint

Dimensions variable

Private collection, London

Photo: Edward Woodman







52 ELECTRIC COLOUR TOWER II

2001

Steel shelving units, found lightboxes, acrylic sheet,
fluorescent light, plugboards, cable

501 x 91 x 31cm

Dispersed

I LOVE KING'S CROSS AND KING'S CROSS LOVES ME, II

1998

Found objects, acrylic sheet, paint

Dimensions variable

Collection Artvest Ltd.

Installation at Tecla Sala, Barcelona

1 April – 4 July 2001



54 **DRAWINGS (BARRIER)**

2002

Ink and pastel on lined paper

30 x 21cm

The artist

following pages:

BARRIER

2002

Found lightboxes, acrylic sheet, vinyl, fluorescent light,
plugboards, cable

285 x 267 x 25cm

Wilkinson Gallery, London

Installation at 38, Langham Street, London

15 March – 28 April 2002









60 **SPECTRUM OF BRICK LANE**

2002–3

Steel shelving units, found lightboxes, acrylic sheet, vinyl,
fluorescent light, plugboards, cable

1500 x 91 x 31 cm

Wilkinson Gallery, London

Installation at Tate Britain, London

27 February – 26 May 2003

Photo: Tate Photography/Mark Heathcote





DAVID BATCHELOR

1955 Born Dundee, Scotland
Lives and works in London

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2004 *Shiny Dirty*, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham
2003 *Spectrum of Hackney Road*, Wilkinson Gallery, London
2002 *Barrier*, 38 Langham Street, London
2001 *Shiny-Dirty*, Habitat, London
2000 *Electric Colour Tower*, Sadlers Wells Theatre, London
Apocalypstick, Anthony Wilkinson Gallery, London
1998 *Monochromobiles*, The Economist Plaza, London
1997 *Shelf-Like, Frame-Like, Note-Like*, Byam Shaw School of Art, London
Polymonochromes, Henry Moore Institute, Leeds
1996 *Polymonochrome Drawings*, Soho House, London
1995 *Serial Colour*, Curtain Road Arts, London

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2002 *Days Like These*, Tate Triennial of Contemporary British Art, Tate Britain
2002 *Furori Uso*, Ferrotel, Pescara, Italy
Colour Love, Johnson County Community College, Kansas
New Religious Art, Liverpool Biennial, Liverpool
2001 *Ruby*, PEARL, London
The Magic Hour: Art and Las Vegas, Neue Galerie, Graz
Another Britannia, Tecla Sala, Barcelona, Fundacion Marcelino Botin, Santander
Amidst Concrete, Clay and General Decay, Konstfack Gallery, Stockholm
2000 *Perfidy*, Monastère de la Tourette, France and Kettles Yard, Cambridge
British Art Show 5, Edinburgh, Southampton; Cardiff; Birmingham
Fact and Value, Charlottenberg Palace, Copenhagen
Give and Take, Jerwood Space, London
1999 *Ninenineninetynine*, Anthony Wilkinson Gallery, London
Limit Less, Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna
East Wing, Courtauld Institute, London
POSTMARK: An Abstract Effect, SITE Santa Fe, New Mexico
1998 *Then and Now*, Lisson Gallery, London
One Wheel on my Monochromobile, Limited Edition for Camden Arts Centre, London
1997 *East International*, The Sainsbury Centre/Norwich School of Art, Norwich
1996 *Station Transformation*, Central Bus Station, Tel Aviv
Abstractions, Byam Shaw, Concourse Gallery, London
1993 Victoria Miro Gallery, London
1990 *Approaches to Realism*, Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool; Goldsmiths Gallery, London
Rotation, Esther Schipper Gallery, Cologne

COMMISSIONS

2003 *West Wing Spectrum*, Barts Hospital, London
2002 *Evergreen*, More London Development, Tower Bridge, London
2001 *Electric Colour Picture*, The Multiple Store, London
2000 *Chromodesks*, Pier Trust, London
Quick Change Room, Sadlers Wells Theatre, London

David Batchelor

Shiny Dirty
Ikon Gallery
4 February – 28 March 2004

Curated by Jonathan Watkins, assisted by Karen Allen

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Front cover

SPECTRUM OF HACKNEY ROAD

2002-03 (detail)

Found dollies, fluorescent light, polycarbonate, cable, plugboards
Wilkinson Gallery, London

Back cover

SPECTRUM OF HACKNEY ROAD

2002-03 (detail)

Found dollies, fluorescent light, polycarbonate, cable, plugboards
Wilkinson Gallery, London

page 1

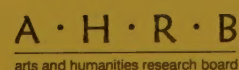
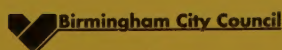
ZÓCALO TOWER

1999-2002

105 x 12cms

coloured adhesive tape

the artist



EncapSulite ...a new concept in fluorescent lighting

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